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REMARKS

The application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated December 10, 2008. Claims 1, 2, 4, 6-10, 12, 15 and 16 were pending, with claims 3, 5, 11, 13 and 14 having previously been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer. By this Amendment, claim 4 has been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer, and claims 1, 2, 15 and 16 have been amended to clarify the claimed subject matter. Claims 1, 2, 6-10, 12, 15 and 16 would remain pending upon entry of this amendment, with claims 1 and 2 being in independent form.

The specification was objected to as having informalities. Claims 1 and 2 were objected to as having informalities. Claims 1-2, 4, 6-10, 12, 15 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as allegedly indefinite. Claim 15 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, as purportedly failing to comply with the written description requirement.

By this amendment, the application has been amended to address the formal matters referenced in the Office Action.

Withdrawal of the objection to the specification, the objection to the claims and the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112 is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 6-10, 12, 15 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as purportedly unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,349,960 to Gondo.

Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is allowable over the cited art, for at least the reason that the cited art does not disclose or suggest the aspects of the present application that a first predetermined number of vibrator elements are disposed in an array at the tip of the insert section of the ultrasonic probe around entire 360 degree outer circumference thereof, and a connection change over switch successively changes over electrical connection of a second predetermined number of vibrator elements among the first predetermined number of

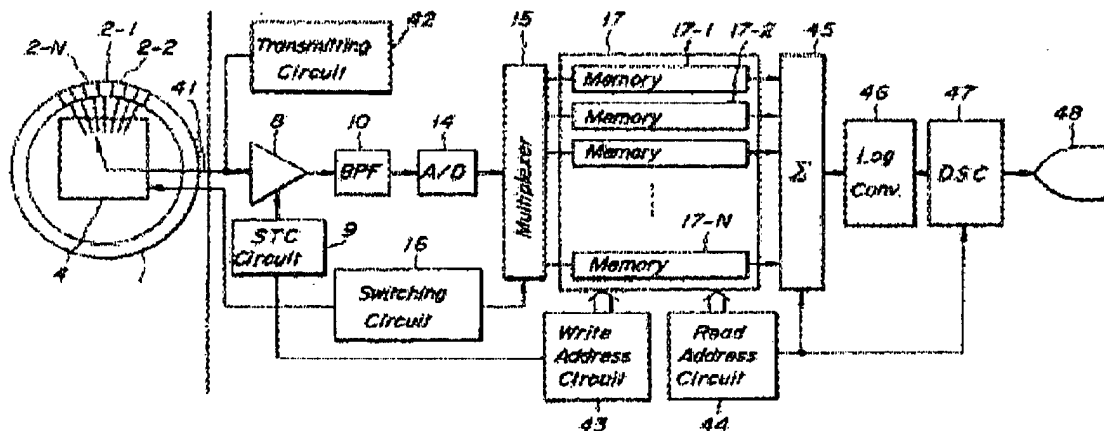
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vibrator elements to be connected with a second predetermined number of ultrasonic wave transmission and reception channels, in which *the second predetermined number of ultrasonic wave transmission and reception channels is smaller than the first predetermined number of vibrator elements.*

Gondo, as understood by applicant, proposes an ultrasonic diagnosing apparatus, as shown in Fig. 9 (reproduced below) of Gondo, including a vibrating element array 1 comprised of a number of vibrating elements 2-1 to 2-N arranged side by side along a circle and provided in a distal end of an insertion section of endoscope together with multiplexer 4.

FIG. 9



In such ultrasonic diagnosing apparatus of Gondo, the vibrating elements 2-1 to 2-N are successively selected by the multiplexer 4, in a time division manner, and a selected vibrating element is connected to a transmitting circuit 42 and a receiving amplifier 8 by means of a signal conductor 41 which extends within a probe to be inserted into a cavity of a living body. An output signal of the receiving amplifier 8 is supplied to a multiplexer 15 via band pass filter 10 and A/D converter 14. The multiplexer 15 is controlled by a switching control circuit 16 in synchronism with the multiplexer 4, so that echo signals obtained by successive vibrating

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elements are stored in *corresponding* wave surface memories 17-1 to 17-N in a wave surface memory unit 17.

The vibrating elements 2-1 to 2-N and the wave surface memories 17-1 to 17-N of Gondo are apparently equated with the vibrator elements and the ultrasonic wave transmission and reception channels of the present application.

However, in Gondo, an identical number (N) of wave surface memories must be provided to store the echo signals obtained by the corresponding number (N) of vibrating elements, in order to maintain the data in a time sequential manner.

The cited art simply does not disclose or suggest the aspects of the present application of an ultrasonic probe wherein *the second predetermined number of ultrasonic wave transmission and reception channels is smaller than the first predetermined number of vibrator elements*.

Applicant submits that the cited art, even when considered along with common sense and common knowledge to one skilled in the art, does **NOT** render unpatentable the above-mentioned aspects of the present application.

Accordingly, applicant respectfully submits that independent claims 1 and 2, and the claims depending therefrom, are allowable over the cited art.

In view of the remarks hereinabove, applicant submits that the application is now in condition for allowance, and earnestly solicits the allowance of the application.

If a petition for an extension of time is required to make this response timely, this paper should be considered to be such a petition. The Patent Office is hereby authorized to charge any required fees in connection with this amendment, and to credit any overpayment, to our Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

If a telephone interview could advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner

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is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,



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